

## Rep. Nadler Claims Major Victory in Reversing EPA Policy Regarding Downtown Manhattan

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NEW YORK - The efforts by Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) in conjunction with residents' coalitions to compel the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take the lead on the cleanup of downtown interiors has caused a major shift in EPA policy, it was announced at the EPA Region II offices in New York City today.

Rep. Nadler was present for the announcement of a new program by the EPA, which has agreed to clean any residential interiors, using Federal guidelines, if a resident requests it. The text of Rep. Nadler's statement at the EPA press conference is below:

"The announcement of the decision by the EPA to reverse its previous policy and assume responsibility for insuring the quality of indoor air in lower Manhattan is truly a breath of fresh air.

I am proud to stand here on behalf of the residents - my constituents. Since I first raised the issue of contaminated interiors downtown, many months ago, the citizens of the area have taken an active and vocal role in bringing attention to this problem. In our joint efforts, there has been a synergy among my office, other local elected officials, residents and activists, as good as I have ever seen.

Some have grumbled that maybe we were too stubborn, too unrelenting in our demands. If standing up for the people of Lower Manhattan until our needs were met makes us stubborn, so be it. If not yielding to offers of Task Forces and exterior cleanings has labeled us unrelenting, then it is a label I'll wear with pride. For today, our so-called stubbornness has gotten results. Today's announcement represents a 180 degree shift in policy by the EPA. Today, they are taking responsibility as the lead agency for the hazardous materials cleanup in residences.

And so, I want to thank the EPA for taking the lead and bringing together FEMA, OSHA, New York City and New York State to undertake this massive project.

Today's announcement is a significant step forward in the long-running effort to ensure that the area affected by the fall of the World Trade Center is safe for all. Cleaning apartments on demand - using certified contractors, working according to Federal standards, and with EPA oversight - is perhaps the largest immediate need. I have maintained all along that this cleanup is the responsibility of the EPA, under the law, and I am pleased to say that it seems that the spirit of the law is being followed today.

I am also pleased that the EPA has promised to establish a citizens advisory group to monitor this project. This advisory group will be made up of residents, local elected officials and other interested parties. The citizens group will be given access to information about the testing and cleanup performed, and it will serve as an official body where grievances can be heard. Rest assured, if any concern arises that the cleanup is not being handled properly, the citizens group will be the first heard from, loud and clear.

The EPA has committed that the remediation will follow all federal guidelines, and we will ensure that this is the case. Anything less is unacceptable. As we all know, the devil could be in the details. We will make sure that the written protocol is comprehensive, appropriate and encompasses all hazardous substances that may pose a threat to public health.

And while today stands as a significant first step, to quote Winston Churchill, "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Indeed, the work I have done in conjunction with residents and our local elected officials was just a first chapter, of sorts. Those efforts allowed us to expose the presence of contamination in the area and what is needed to be done to correct the situation. Today marks the beginning of a resolution to this problem. But the problem is far from solved.

While residences will be taken care of, there are still non-residential interiors that are contaminated. It is now up to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to fund the cleanup of those areas too. I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to get action on the cleanup of non-residential interiors , namely schools and commercial buildings.

Cleaning individual apartments on demand is a commendable action. However, unless the cleanup is done building by building, as opposed to unit by unit, there will be a threat of recontamination. Therefore, it is absolutely essential for residents to coordinate and request a cleaning of their entire building, en masse. My office will work in conjunction with community and residents' organizations to ensure that cleaning takes place, building by building, wherever possible. Let me also stress that while the EPA will start cleaning the area of Lower Manhattan south of Canal St., I have been assured that testing will be done, and an expansion of the program, geographically, will occur where needed.

Finally, until every interior is cleaned of all hazardous materials, and sensitive testing proves that to be the case, I expect that my constituents will not rest, and I can completely assure you that I will not drop this issue.

For today, however, I believe that the residents of the area should appreciate the results we have netted, together. Months ago, when I first raised the issue along with the other local elected officials in the area, after hearing a number of residents' complaints, no one would take responsibility for cleaning the hazardous dust that blew into buildings all over the area. In fact, everyone had a reason why it wasn't within their purview. Today, the EPA has stepped up to the plate, and is taking action, due in no small part to our efforts. Today is a day for all of us who worked so hard on this issue to be truly proud."

Rep. Nadler has served in Congress since 1992. He represents the 8th Congressional District of New York, which includes parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn, including the area subject to the EPA cleanup.

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